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School Environment

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SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Curriculum and Instruction Review

Pat Donegan

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PART A

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

1. Introduction

Walk into any school and you sense it immediately. The feeling envelops you the moment you walk into the building. You can feel it, experience it, but it defies objective analysis.

The feeling you sense as you walk into a school building has been labelled as the school's climate, environment, atmosphere and more recently as a school's ethos. (Mortimore, 1981). An objective description of a school's environment is difficult to verbalize but the casual observer can point to indicators. A friendly welcome from a secretary, a good morning from a student rushing to class, an interesting display on a bulletin board, a group of students sitting on the floor noisily exchanging ideas or perhaps a teacher who invites you to the staff room for coffee while he tries to locate the principal.

The opposite scenario provides a visitor with an increased sense of depression as he walks a long, grey hallway lacking any indication that hundreds of students work within the building. The monotony of the hallway is broken only by a sign that states, "All Visitors Must Report to the Office." A student walks by but does not look up, all doors are closed and a heavy silence pervades as you tip-toe toward the office.

Both examples are exaggerated but indicate clearly the magnitude of difference from school to school. Does the first school provide more satisfaction for students and teachers?

Is productivity higher and academic results better in the former? Common sense would indicate that satisfaction, productivity and results would be much higher in a school with a positive environment but there is much more involved than the two scenarios would indicate. Both schools have taken years to develop and both are the result of planned or unplanned use of a large number of resources.

11. What is School Environment?

Definitions of the "feeling" are plentiful. All definitions tend to focus on environment as a force which develops an individual according to the standards of the group. "Educational environment refers to the conditions, forces and external stimuli that foster the development of individual characteristics." (Sinclair, 1970). Further to this definition Bloom states, "The environment is a shaping and reinforcing force which acts on the individual. (Bloom, 1968). More precisely Bloom indicates, "We regard the environment and providing a network of forces and factors which surround, engulf and play on the indivudals." (Bloom, 1968). Peter Mortimore, one of the authors of Fifteen Thousand Hours uses the term ethos which means "The guiding beliefs, standards or ideals that characterize or pervade a group or community. A spirit that motivates the ideas, customs or practices of a people." (Rutter and others, 1979).

Accepting the validity of these definitions places the responsibility for the most part on educators for the satisfaction and productivity of students and teachers in the school. This counteracts the belief held by educators that a

child's family background, social position, parental attitudes determine success or failure. Certainly, these factors will have an influence but as Rutter states, "Schools do indeed have an important impact on children's development and it does matter which school a child attends. Moreover, the results provide strong indications of what are the particular features of school organization and functioning which makes for success." (Rutter and others, 1979).

111. Environment And School Effectiveness

Does the environment established within a school have an impact on the effectiveness of that school? Prior to 1965, and as a result primarily of the Coleman report schools were not seen as having a major impact on student achievement or satisfaction. Coleman conducted a large scale survey of the achievement of some 645,000 students in 400 elementary and secondary schools. The results indicated that educational attainment was largely independent of the schooling a child received. These pessimistic findings pervaded the thinking of educators for a period of time and seemed to indicate that schools could not compensate for the numerous family and societal influences.

However, more recent research appears to challenge the notion that schools don't make a difference by showing that school climate and school achievement are closely correlated. Smith et all in School Leadership: A Handbook for Survival discuss Brookover's study of 91 elementary schools in Michigan. They report that Brookover and colleagues " ... are able to

show convincingly that their climate variables had a stronger influence on achievement than did the economic and racial factors." (Smith et al, 1981).

Another study, this time conducted in Britain has drawn similar conclusions. In Fifteen Thousand Hours, Michael Rutter, Barbara Maughan, Peter Mortimore, Janet Outson and Alan Smith concluded that:

> differences between schools in outcome were systematically related to their characteristics as social institutions. Factors as varied as the degree of academic emphasis, teacher actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and rewards, good conditions for pupils, and the extent to which children were able to take responsibility were all significantly associated with outcome differences between schools. All of these factors were open to modification by the staff, rather than fixed by external constraints. (Rutter et al, 1979).

Rutter and his cowriters suggest that a school's environment or ethos does appear to influence the "outcomes" of the school - student achievement, behavior and attitudes.

Thus, any improvement in a school's environment will result in an improvement of that school's effectiveness in attaining its goals. The goals of an effective school would centre around two major areas:

(i) The Productivity of Staff and Students

(ii) The Satisfaction of Staff and Students

The specific goals of a school may vary in wording or emphasis but the majority strive for a satisfying environment where all participants feel a sense of productivity and achievement. An effective school is one where staff and students are reaching their individual and collective goals. Fox in School Climate Improvement uses the term humane school environment instead of positive but states that the goals of a school with a humane environment are:

(i) To provide throughout the school a wholesome, stimulating and productive learning environment conducive to academic achievement and personal growth of youth at different levels of development.

(ii) To provide a pleasant and satisfying school environment within which young people can live and work. To summarize these goals or outgrowths of a school climate can best be characterized as productivity and satisfaction. One without the other is insufficient (Fox et al).

Having established that the environment within the school has a definite impact on the "outcomes" of the school it would appear logical to examine the components of a positive school environment and recommend their immediate implementation. However, the process of attaining a positive school environment and thus an effective school does not allow such a simplistic, recipe approach. Joseph D'Amico in his article "Each Effective School May Be One of a Kind" compares the research on effective school and concludes:

> Effective schools exist. Hundreds of them have been described. Each one's effectiveness, however, seems to represent an intricate, perhaps idiosyncratic phenomenon that, in turn, is probably the result of intricate, perhaps idiosyncratic, processes. As yet there are no recipes for creating effective schools. (D'Amico, Dec. 1982).

The listing and discussion of the components of a positive school environment will provide a framework for those interested in examining the concept of school environment in relation to their own school.

IV. The Components of School Environment

To list the components of school environment would be an endless task. Using Halpin's analogy "that climate is to a school what personality is to the individual" allows one to appreciate the difficulty of isolating all of the determinants of a school environment. As with an individual's personality environment is not static. It is constantly changing in response to new circumstances and changes within the group. All one can safely say is that there are numerous observable practices within the school building that has an effect on the environment.

Halpin and Croft have identified eight characteristics, four belonging to the group and four belonging to the leader which determine the organizational climate of a school. The characteristics are:

A. Characteristics of the Group

(i) Disengagement

(ii) Hindrance

(iii) Esprit

(iv) Intimacy

B. Behavior of the Leader

(v) Aloofness

(vi) Production Emphasis

(vii) Thrust

(viii) Consideration

These eight characteristics combine to establish the climate of the school or organization. As a result of the interplay of these characteristics Halpin views climate along a continuum containing six climates. The climates identified are:

(1) The Open Climate

(2) The Autonomous Climate

(3) The Controlled Climate

(4) The Familiar Climate

(5) The Paternal Climate

(6) The Closed Climate (Halpin, 1966).

Based on Halpin's school climate questionnaire OCDQ - Organization Climate Description Questionnaire, one can attempt to describe the climate within a school.

Kelley in his article "Auditing School Climate" relies on two major dimensions of climate - Satisfaction and Productivity but includes the various audiences involved in school environment.

Audiences in School environment	Climate Dimensions	
	Satisfaction	Productivity
Students	Purposes Indicators Status Objectives Plans	Purposes Indicators Status Objectives Plans
Faculty and Staff	Purposes Indicators Status Objectives Plans	Purposes Indicators Status Objectives Plans
Patrons	Purposes Indicators Status Objectives Plans	Purposes Indicators Status Objectives Plans

Using the chart Kelley describes a five step plan to audit the climate of the school. His approach involves:

(1) Establishing a purpose for each audience under both climate dimensions.

(2) Formulate the indicators to monitor the degree to which the purposes are being met.

(3) Prepare a status report describing the degree to which the indicators show the purposes are on are not being met.

(4) Examination of the status report should lead planners to the identification of objectives to be met during the next annual cycle.

(5) Develop a plan designed to carry out the activities related to the objectives. (Kelley, Dec. 1981).

Phi Delta Kappa in the CFN Ltd. - School Climate Profile has organized school climate under four major areas with several sub-points which determine school climate. They perceive

climate as organized under the following headings:

A. General Climate Factors

1. Respect
2. Trust
3. High Morale
4. Opportunities for Input
5. Continuous Academic and Social Growth
6. Cohesiveness
7. School Renewal
8. Caring

B. Program Determinants

1. Opportunities for Active Learning
2. Individualized Performance Expectations
3. Varied Learning Environments
4. Flexible Curriculum and Extra-Curricular Activities
5. Support and Structure Appropriate to Learners Maturity
6. Rules Cooperatively Determined
7. Varied Reward Systems

C. Process Determinants

1. Problem Solving Ability
2. Improvement of School Goals
3. Identifying and Working With Conflicts
4. Effective Communications
5. Involvement in Decision Making
6. Autonomy and Accountability
7. Effective Teaching-Learning Strategies
8. Ability to Plan For the Future

D. Material Determinants

1. Adequate Resources
2. Supportive and Efficient Logistical System
3. Suitability of School Plant

(CFN Ltd., 1973).

Each of the twenty-seven determinants have sub-headings or statements to be ranked by the individuals involved. In addition, the answers are divided into What Is and What Should Be. Based on the data a profile can be organized to determine strengths and weaknesses in each determinant.

It becomes apparent after examining the various determinants of school environment that organizing a comprehensive list is possible. The process of examining school environment should be a local school function to allow participants to determine the characteristics they wish to measure. Kelley in his summary of assessment tools provides the following guidelines.

(1) Congruence or compatability with the definition of climate established for the organization being measured.

(2) Acceptable levels of reliability and validity for tools selected.

(3) Feasibility of tools and procedures selected including ease of administration, reasonable costs for administration, and availability of expertise for interpretation of data. (Kelley, 1980).

V. Environmental Factors Contributing To Effective Schools

The literature discusses hundreds of characteristics related

to effective schools. This section will examine in a general way those environmental factors that appear to play a major role in establishing a positive atmosphere in a school. It should be noted that none of these factors in themselves guarantee effectiveness but in an intricate combination establish a positive environment where effectiveness is enhanced.

For organizational purposes the characteristics have been organized under the following headings:

(i) The Administrative Factor

(ii) The Teacher Factor

(iii) Other

A. The Administrative Factor

The majority of studies examined point clearly to the administrator, in most cases the principal as the key factor in establishing the environment within a school. According to Ronald Edmund an effective school is characterized by "strong administrative leadership by the principal, especially in regard to instructional matters." (Cohen, 1981). Mortimore in his research of London schools reports, "That a school can develop a positive ethos if strong, positive leadership exists that manages to capture the enthusiasm of the teachers without being either too democratic or too autocratic." (Mortimore, 1981). Hersh in his summary states that an excellent school is characterized by "leadership seen by students, teachers and parents as supportive, caring and trustworthy." (Hersh, 1979). Trump in his article summarizes the role of the principal in an effective school, "faculties that move rapidly from theory to

practice are led by a self-directed, change oriented administrators. Very simply stated, the principal knows where he is going. He reads widely, listens to teachers and other experts, and reflects on the pressures that come from many sources. He has developed a philosophy of education." (Trump, 1967).

The principal does specific things that can be identified to enhance the environment within the school.

(i) The principal develops a consensus among staff members about academic goals and behavior expectations. He sees to it that these goals and expectations are understood by the students and systematically checks to see that the school is operating accordingly. (Squires, 1981).

(ii) The principal models appropriate behavior. He works hard to interact with students, parents and staff. He attempts to monitor classroom activity and supervise instructional programs.

(iii) The principal provides feedback that supports and recognizes successful academic performance and appropriate behavior. As well, principals provide feedback to staff by observing classrooms, conferring with teachers about instructional issues and providing inservice to enhance teachers' skills.

(iv) The principal gives special attention to the physical needs of students and teachers. He attempts to provide an attractive environment where positive interactions take place. (Millar, 1981).

(v) The principal provides support for staff members in

conflicts with students and parents. The support is given after carefully examining the circumstances and determining the problem. The support given the teacher is not blind support. If the teacher is at fault, the principal will make it clear privately and assist in resolving the conflict. (Millar, 1981).

(vi) The principal communicates to parents, students and teachers about issues related to the school. His communication is open to allow individuals or groups to discuss issues, urge changes or provide alternatives to existing policies and procedures. This communication is as individual as possible, not relying solely on mass communication.

(vii) The principal establishes a school wide system for monitoring and assessing pupil performance which is tied to instructional objectives. (Cohen, 1981).

B. The Teacher Factor

A second major factor in determining the environment of a school is the classroom teacher. Mortimore in his study of teachers in London schools found five differences in teachers in effective schools. He states in an interview on his research:

(1) They (teachers) showed a positive attitude toward learning.

(2) They were generally more organized.

(3) They stressed rewards rather than punishment.

(4) They made conditions for students as nice as possible.

(5) They involved students to a greater degree in their own learning. (Mortimore, 1981).

Several of these points are supported further by Millar who says that in a school with a positive spirit teachers:

(1) Look forward to going to work in the morning and are not in a hurry to leave in the afternoon.

(2) Exhibit concern for the direction in which the school and the programs are going.

(3) Actively participate in school functions, committees and organizations.

(4) Willingly perform various tasks that are above and behond their stated duties.

(5) Derive satisfaction from being a member of a school system and teaching profession.

(6) Are supportive of the school, its goals and philosophy.

(7) Are actively engaged in improving school-community relations. (Millar, 1981).

The research mentions hundreds of characteristics of teachers in effective schools. The following characteristics represent a synthesis of those findings:

(1) Have positive feelings about themselves and their progession. They feel competent in dealing with instructional matters, student problems and communication. Hersh adds the term efficacy which he indicates as "a sense of potency which provides teachers with the energy needed for relentless and persevering effort required to get many students to work." (Hersh, 1979). Tonelson in his article on teacher self-concept puts forth the idea of classroom psychological environment.

"A teacher with a healthy self-concept can develop a classroom environment characterized by warmth where each student feels that he is respected, acceptance where the individual students are allowed the freedom to explore, to have ideas, beliefs and values. (Tonelson, 1981). He concludes that a teacher with a healthy self-concept can create this positive classroom climate.

(2) Have a clear set of goals and objectives guiding their instructional planning and teaching. In an effective school, teachers have set specific objectives for their students based on their assessment of student needs and abilities. As well, the teacher uses a variety of techniques to assess his students ranging from school wide standardized tests to daily monitoring of student homework. With a clear set of objectives for his students a teacher can plan learning activities more effectively.

(3) Have high expectations for the students they teach. According to Hersh high expectations carry several messages. First, they symbolize the demand for excellence. Second, they communicate to the students that teachers care. (Hersh, 1981). Rutter supports this view based on his research. He indicates:

> Children are very quick to pick up other people's expectations about their academic competence and their behavior. Other research has shown that to an important extent, people tend to live up, or

down to what is expected of them.

Our results suggest that the same principles apply within secondary schools where homework was regularly set and marked, and where teachers expressed expectations that a high portion of children would do well on National examinations. Children are likely to work better if taught in an atmosphere of confidence that they can and will succeed in the tasks they are set. Of course, in turn, the children's good work will tend to reinforce the teacher's high expectations of them. The same mechanisms apply as much to behavior as scholastic success. (Rutter and others, 1979).

Duckett further reinforces the need for high expectations: "Standards of achievement in effective schools are high, yet reasonable and students expect to master their academic work and graduate from high school." (Duckett and others, 1980).

(4) Have established a strong emphasis on academics. Teachers emphasize a curriculum of reading, writing and math in business-like environment that promotes and reinforces disciplined work (Duckett and others, 1980). In addition to a strong academic program the research points to organized instruction that absorbs much of the school day. Squires notes that in effective schools teachers spend more time on lessons (beginning and ending lessons on time) and provide periods of quiet work. The school

norm of academic emphasis promotes student environment and coverage. (Squires, 1981).

Sinclair in his work related to University and College supports the emphasis on academics. He has identified five variables related to an effective school environment. Among the five he mentions scholarships, which he describes as "an academic, scholarly environment. The emphasis is on competitively high academic achievement and a serious interest in scholarship." (Sinclair, 1969).

Hersh in his article "Clues to Good Education Shine Through", suggests as well that high academic learning time is a characteristic of an effective school. By high academic learning he refers to actual classroom time spent on a subject area (time on task). As well, he refers to the amount of time a student spends on a learning activity where he experiences at least ninety percent success. (Hersh, 1981).

(5) Have established within their classrooms a sense of order and discipline. Teachers in effective schools establish very early a sense order and discipline within their classrooms which reflect the order and discipline within the school. Squires in his synthesis of the research indicates that "Effective schools generally recognize a uniform standard of discipline which is enforced by administrators, teachers and students." (Squires, 1980). Rutter indicates that

classroom routines also promote an orderly environment - lessons start and end on time; students bring books, pencils and folders to class; and teachers give and correct homework. (Rutter and others, 1979). Hersh adds to this view by saying, "Administrators, teachers and students understand and agree to basic rules of conduct. Such rules are uniformly enforced. Effective schools seem to find a happy medium between too rigid and too loose discipline. (Hersh, 1981).

The literature related to order and discipline points to consistent and fair discipline that all groups within the school understand and share. Other writers indicate specifics for obtaining this order and discipline. Among the points mentioned are respect for every individual in the school, commitment to a work atmosphere, pervasive caring on the part of the staff for all students and shared activities among students, teachers and parents.

(6) Have organized a system of feedback. In effective schools, teachers within the classroom have established a system of feedback for students related to their academic and social growth. This feedback emphasizes the positive and developmental nature of growth. Squires in his article, "Improving Classrooms and Schools: What's Important" indicates that feedback that supports and recognizes academic performance and appropriate behavior is more likely to occur in effective schools. (Squires, 1981).

Hersh points out that effective schools and classrooms have established a system of public display of excellent work, honor rolls, assemblies to honor students, notes sent to parents and students and verbal and non-verbal praise from teachers and students. (Hersh, 1981). As well, the need for academic feedback is stressed in the form of standardized tests, classroom tests and quizzes, formal and informal, written and oral; school wide and district wide. Such frequent monitoring serves an important diagnostic function, prevents students from falling behind, and tells students what is being taught is important. (Hersh, 1981)

Rutter in his research speaks at length about the importance of feedback. In part Rutter says:

> The feedback that a child receives about what is and what is not acceptable at school will also constitute a powerful influence on his behavior. The feedback may be direct and immediate in terms of praise or reprimand in the classrooms; it may be less direct and more delayed in terms of annual prizes for work or sports; or it may be quite indirect as in putting children's work up on the wall.
>
> Our findings showed that the most immediate and direct feedback in terms of praise or approval had the strongest association with pupil behavior. The amount of punishment showed only weak and

generally non-significant associations with outcome, and when the associations did reach significance, the trend was for higher levels of punishment to be associated with worse outcomes. (Rutter and others, 1979).

C. Other Factors

The following factors are grouped as other because they do not fit specifically with the administrative or teacher factor but are in many ways related to the actions of these two groups.

(i) Coherence

Wynne in "Looking At Good Schools" speaks of coherence as a characteristic of good schools. He states, in part "the coherence in a good school comes from the appropriate meshing of many elements" (Wynne, 1981). Anderson reporting on Wynne's earlier research states "Coherence, a pervasive quality of good schools includes variables that reflect clarity, purposefullness, good communication, consensus and consistency." (Anderson, 1981)

Sinclair supports this view when he speaks of community. He indicates that the environment in a school with community is supportive and sympathetic. A feeling of group welfare and group loyalty encompasses the school as a whole. The school is a community and has a congenial atmosphere. (Sinclair, 1969).

(ii) Respect

In an effective school students and staff see themselves as worthwhile people, believing that they

have ideas and that those ideas are listened to and make a difference. In addition respect implies that every member within an environment can have an impact on the environment. A sense of futility develops when an individual cannot be a part of the direction or the change within his environment. This applies equally to students, teachers, principal, support staff and parents.

(iii) Size of School

One concludes after examining the determinants of a positive school environment that a small school would lend itself to successfully initiating or practicing the determinants. This view is supported by Halpin when he addresses the issue of school size: "The critical issue is probably the size of the school. In a small school the principal can contend with the situation. Beyond the effort required to meet daily exigencies he has enough energy left to devote to organizational climate as such." (Halpin, 1966). Barker and Gump made detailed investigations in high schools varying in enrollment from 35 to 2,287 students all located in a homogeneous economic, cultural and political region. They conclude: "The data of this research and our own educational values tell us that a school should be sufficiently small that all of its students are needed for its enterprises. A school should be small enough that students are not redundant." (Barker and Gump, 1964).

V1. Measuring School Environment

Several tools are available to measure school environment. The tools are only useful if they measure and provide information on specific determinants of school environment agreed upon by participants. Before considering a tool the participants should agree on a definition of school environment based on the local situation. The following examines seven instruments designed to measure school environment.

(1) O.C.D.Q. - The Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire was used by Andrew Halpin to survey 71 elementary schools chosen from six different regions of the U.S. There were 1,151 respondents on the sixty-four item Likert scale.

The sixty-four items were assigned to eight subtests. Four of these subjects pertain to characteristics of the staff as a group, and the other four to characteristics of the principal as a leader. From the scores on these eight subjects Halpin constructed for each school a profile or psychograph, which depicts the school's organizational climate.

The eight subtests are:

Characteristics of the Group.

1. Disengagement
2. Hindrance
3. Esprit
4. Intimacy

Behavior of the Leader.

5. Aloofness
6. Production Emphasis
7. Thrust
8. Consideration

As a result of the questionnaire Halpin identified six organizational climates and found that these could be arranged along a continuum defined at one end by the open climate, and at the other by a closed climate. The six climates identified are:

1. The Open Climate
2. The Autonomous Climate
3. The Controlled Climate
4. The Familiar Climate
5. The Paternal Climate
6. The Closed Climate. (Halpin, 1966).

(2) The School District Climate Profile (SDCP)

The S.D.C.P. is a questionnaire to measure satisfaction with current conditions and processes in school environments. Questions are organized into four broad categories:

1. General Climate Factors
2. Program Determinants
3. Process Determinants
4. Material Determinants

They are designed to obtain perceptions about the quality of leadership styles, problem solving and decision making

methods, conflict resolution, interpersonal relations, goal setting, organizational communication, administrator and staff preparation, and so forth. Used as a needs assessment tool with audiences responding on a scale from "ideal" to "real", the S.C.D.P. is useful for identifying target areas for climate improvement projects. (Kelley, 1980).

(3) Organizational Climate Index (OCI)

The OCI measure perceptions of faculty and employees. The original version contained 300 items. Further refinements have resulted in a short form of the OCI (80 items) which provides measures of six first-order factors and two second-order factors. The first-order factors:

1. Intellectual Climate
2. Achievement Standards
3. Personal Dignity
4. Organizational Effectiveness
5. Orderliness
6. Impulse Control

These six factors, by further factor analysis and combination, yield two major dimensions of school environments as perceived by staff:

1. development press
2. staff effectiveness. (Kelley, 1980).

(4) The High School Characteristics Index (H.S.C.I.)

The Classroom Environment Index (C.E.I.)

The Elementary and Secondary School Index (E.S.I.) All three instruments are used to measure student perceptions of climate. The H.S.C.I. developed first has 300 items and yields about 30 scales, seven first order factors and three second order factors. The C.E.I. developed for use in classroom populations, is similar in style and output to H.S.C.I. The E.S.I. is a short form of H.C.S.I. or C.E.I. It has 61 items and outputs are first order and second order factors. The seven first order factors include:

1. intellectual climate
2. expressiveness
3. group social life
4. peer group dominance
5. personal dignity
6. achievement standards
7. control

The identification of second order factors yields three dimensions. The first dimension, development press, is a combination of the first five of the first order factors. The other two second order factors, control and peer group dominance, are identical to their first order factor counterparts. (Kelley, 1980).

(5) Learning Environment Inventory (L.E.I.) which is an outgrowth of the Older Classroom Climate Questionnaire (C.C.Q.). The L.E.I. is used with the secondary school students to measure such school characteristics

as:

1. Cohesiveness
2. Diversity
3. Formality
4. Speed
5. Environment
6. Friction
7. Goal Direction
8. Favoritism
9. Difficulty
10. Apathy
11. Democracy
12. Cliquishness
13. Satisfaction
14. Disorganization
15. Competitiveness

A shorter version of the L.E.I. is the "My Class" or "My School" form to be used with elementary school students. (Kelley, 1980).

(6) Quality of School Life (Q.S.L.)

Q.S.L. has 27 items that measure three dimensions: Students' satisfaction with school, commitment to classwork, and reactions to teachers.

(7) Using Existing Data to Assess Climate

Another excellent source of data often overlooked is existing data at the school or system level. Kelley points out that schools have an abundance of data available which when properly organized can reveal areas of strengths and weaknesses. Examples of such data are:

1. Aptitude Tests
2. Achievenment Tests
3. Absenteeism Records
4. Tardiness
5. Student Involvement
6. Disciplinary Referrals
7. Academic Achievement

Existing data can be organized to show patterns occurring over extended time periods.

School environment can be measured but care must be taken in establishing clearly the definition of climate and the selection of an instrument which will measure the determinants used in the definition.

VII. Conclusion

The review of the literature has examined school environment by defining the term in relationship to the school context, by attempting to examine the relationship between environment and school effectiveness, by examining the components of school environment and their implications for specific administrative and teacher actions. As well, a number of instruments used to measure school climate were examined briefly.

Attempting to unify the threads in the literature appears futile but certain agreement exists.

(i) Schools do possess something called environment, climate, atmosphere or ethos. This environment is unique to each organization.

(ii) The differences evident from school to school are complex and very difficult to describe objectively.

(iii) The climate of a school does affect student outcomes including achievement and satisfaction.

(iv) Assessment devices are available to determine a school's climate.

(v) Climate improvement is a useful endeavor but cannot be effective in fragmented efforts.

PART B

PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN SASKATCHEWAN

Part B

1. Perceptions of School Environment in Saskatchewan

It should be noted at the outset that this section is a very subjective approach to a question that requires much objective study. As well, time and resources did not allow the committee to study or in fact gather data from a large enough sample to draw sound conclusions.

Despite the limitations described a lot of interesting and useful information was gathered. The committee views this attempt of informal research as the beginning of a process to examine perceptions of school environment in Saskatchewan.

The committee members initially attempted a working definition of the term school environment. In keeping with the literature our definitions were varied but contained many common elements.

School Environment

1. "The factors involved in school environment relate to job satisfaction - a sense of accomplishment. Postive feedback from administrator to teacher to student to home. Student-teacher involvement, a sense of community within the school. A sense of belonging."
2. "School environment is made up of those factors which affect the feelings people in a school have about the school and its intended outcomes. Those factors include the way people treat each other. Rules and regulations and how they are enforced. The degree of control and

freedom. The amount of responsibility people are assigned. Feelings of belonging. Security and predictability."

3. "School environment is the sum total of factors that contribute to the quality of life of the individuals within the school as they work toward the attainment of its goals. Factors involved. An understanding of the rules and regulations. A respect for each individual. An opportunity for involvement and contribution. A feeling that each person can make a difference. Opportunities for choice. Adequate provision for physical needs. Opportunity for achievement at many levels ..."

Principals' Perceptions of School Environment

Sample: 36 Principals

11 - Rural

25 - Urban

The principals were asked to respond to the question, "What have you done during the past year to improve school environment?" They were asked four other questions but question 1 will be examined in this section.

There has been no attempt made to categorize responses although definite categories can be seen.

Responses:

1. I have continued to encourage staff to provide throughout the school a stimulating, supportive, caring environment. We are encouraging good citizenship, emulating pioneer values. This has meant an emphasis on hallway and

playground courtesy, on the work ethic. As principal I set the tone so that all who enter are aware of a welcoming environment. We continue to work on the physical aspects of the building - plants, bulletin boards. Staff continues to work on a whole school philosophy of caring and understanding...

2. Worked on a program to reduce student conflict. Introduced a structured program of developmental supervision for all teachers.
3. At school opening set half-day to set school goals and objectives.
4. More regular assemblies. More attempts to involve parents with positive circumstances. Teacher clarification of student expectations.
5. Facilitate bringing of parents and teachers together to discuss mutual concerns. Arrange out of school educational experiences for Grade 7 - 8. Assist teachers in program planning.
6. Catch a student doing something good. Positive attitude with staff. Display student work in classrooms and halls. Invite parents to become involved in the school. School ground turfed with new grass.
7. Established a staff council. Staff development of goals and roles. After school program for students and adults. Community social events and newsletter.
8. We have set up a pupil appraisal team meeting on a monthly basis to assist teachers with children who are in

difficulty. A committee has been set up to help plan and develop staff meeting agendas. Worked closer with the community developer to get a greater degree of community involvement.

9. I have set, in conjunction with the staff, using a democratic, consultative and facilitative process, specific objectives for the school. The objectives include both affective and cognitive developmental areas for children.

10. Students - reduced the number of students in Division 1 classrooms. Promoted the C.A.R.E. program. Added more student centred articles to the newsletter. Teachers - was able to equalize program relief for all teachers. More Division 1 teachers involved in extra-curricular activities.

11. Established a parent council. Student council involving staff liaison. Friday parent newsletter and monthly staff newsletter.

12. Placed a real emphasis on the fine arts program, especially art and school decor. Made a point of being highly visible, involved and approachable. Sports philosophy changed to almost 100% participation in fun activities and almost no emphasis on team sports.

13. Planting of tulips with each student. Borrowed five frames to display student art work. Displayed photographs of school events. Displayed much student art work. Senior students paired with junior students in a care

project. Recognition of individuals and team achievement in assemblies. Recarpetting of learning resource centre.

14. Creative playground.

15. Have teachers actively involved in participatory decision-making especially when it affects them directly. Establishing and maintaining a sound communication network. (Daily memos, individual notes, staff meetings.) By establishing a team approach to developmental supervision which focuses on growth.

16. Reorganized classes. Re-allocated classroom space. Involved a greater number of parent volunteers. Planned programs with teachers/consultants.

17. Environment - all surrounding conditons, things, or influences that affect the growth and development of living things. All children have access to Phys Ed activities before and after school. Computer is now available to all teachers and students in the school. Expanded the program in expressive music, movement, acting and drama. Have given support and encouragement to Pro-Kindergarten French Immersion program. Attempted to reduce the number of groups in Language Arts.

18. Re-organized the house system. We have encouraged open and frequent staff interaction both professionally and socially.

19. We have attempted to formulate and enforce a more consistent staff philosophy/approach to student management and discipline.

20. Attempted to make the resource centre an integral part of each years program.
21. We made a concentrated effort to have more communication related to staff supervision of students.
22. We are moving into a whole school program of teaching/ learning styles.
23. Worked with superintendent to staff the school in such a way as to cover all areas. Worked with staff to program effectively. Worked to remove dissatisfiers. Maintained student activities to keep student interest.
24. Encouraged openness and trust through better communications. Encouraged the idea that the best education for children comes when we work together.
25. Moved aides around in the school. Changed emphasis in Phys. Ed. from "regular Phys. Ed." to physical development.
26. Painted the interior of the school in carefully selected colors. Removed all graffiti from exterior walls. Purchased large plants for the school.
27. A start has been made on a creative playground. Bulletin boards were installed in the Grade 1 and 2 rooms. Five-hundred dollars was spent on library books. Each high school teacher received one prep period. Teacher-Aide was assigned to the library.
28. Two night camping trip for Grade 7 - 10. Spirit week - organized by students. Sports activities.
29. We try each year to improve school environment in the following ways:

(i) Keep courses up to date and bring in new courses that are relevant to societal changes and to the needs of specific students,

(ii) Additional student interests are provided for by extra-curricular activities - sports, newspaper, yearbook, drama, camping, Christian Fellowship, House League, S.R.C.

(iii) Student government has a vital role to play providing interesting activities for students.

30. Basically I have tried to balance the administration of the school in relation to the Education Act, Local Policy and the legitimate requirements of the teachers. With clear knowledge of educational limitations I have stressed a collegial approach to school management with consideration given to legitimate authority channels.

31. V.T.R. unit purchased. Divisions 3 - 4 S.R.C. organized.

32. Encouraging staff and students to be positive in their words and actions. Developing an attitude of mutual respect between all parties involved.

33. Held a book fair ... excellent.

34. Designed a volunteer program to allow more parents to become involved with the regular program. A home visitation program was started.

35. School tone provides the proper "atmosphere for learning". Teachers must be ever conscious of how they speak to children - in the classroom, in the hallways. Yelling is discouraged - raised voices are rare and only used

in special cases.

36. School was redecorated and painted throughout. New facilities were added for art and music. Display areas for student work included.

11. Superintendents' and Directors' Perceptions of School Environment

This summary is based on a very small sample - three senior administrators, two urban and one rural. Despite the small sample the respondents have provided excellent insights into the perceptions of school environment. The following summarizes their views:

Leadership

The superintendent of schools has visions about how schools might be and uses his/her energies and talents to achieve the dream.

The director can play a role in determining school environment by developing specific expectations. Setting of expectations regarding: communication, discipline and control, materials and resources, program, responsibilities.

The superintendent of schools demonstrates what he/she stands for, provides leadership toward the achievement of objectives and finds ways and means over a period of time for the system to develop its soul on a philosophic basis.

First, the director must make provisions for job description to be developed which list duties that clearly indicate to administration and support staff

that they are expected to exert a positive influence on the school environment in the ways they deal with teacher attitudes, instructional techniques, programme development and staff evaluation.

Administration

Who do we recommend to administer the school? There has to be consideration of personality, attitudes, communication and public relation skill. Consideration of community attitude. Empathy. Ability to relate to people. Leadership style.

The director must have expectations regarding the physical aspects of schools. By physcial aspects I mean the numbers and placement of teaching staff, the equipment that is available, the instructional supplies that are available, the new construction or renovations. ...The school environment.

The superintendent of schools is one of the more critical variables in a school division in influencing effective schools, developing caring attitudes, modelling, establishing an environment which makes the children seek education, guiding formation of habits, making staff members feel up-to-date with instructional practises, demonstrating concern for what students may or may not become, helping to develop a philosophy of life ...

Board policies. The Superintendent should attempt to be fair and impartial in attempting to apply policy to: teacher leaves, professional development, curriculum development, transfers, application of LINC and CUPE agreements.

General

Support the school division and staff in the work in the schools but also in efforts to explain schools to the parents and community.

111. Student Perceptions of School Environment

Student responses are based on an informal written response to three questions.

1. What are some of the good things (positive) about school?
2. What are some of the bad things (negative) about school?
3. What would you do to make school a better place?

The three questions do not specifically mention the term environment, but do attempt to elicit response in a general way to positive and negative features of a school.

Responses were received from 337 students ranging from grade four to grade twelve. The sample was drawn randomly from urban and rural schools in various educational settings. Schools ranged from (K - 8), (K - 12), (7 - 9), (7 - 12), (1 - 8).

The results are organized under the following headings:

1. Positive Factors

2. Negative Factors

3. Wishes and Dreams

The questionnaire was completely open-ended with no limitations set by the researcher.

(i) Positive Factors

Facilities	School is bright and clean
	Water fountains and clean washrooms
	Good playground equipment
	Quiet sports around the school
	Windows that open
	Canteen
	Gym equipment in good repair
	Big playground
	New paint job
	Hill for sliding
	New rink
	Nicely decorated rooms and hallways
	Carpeting
	Libraries

Program - Positive Factors

	Fun activities	Shop
	Music	Home Economics
	Mathematics	Health
	Learning centre activities	Biology
	Writing	Algebra
	Spelling	Guidance
	Reading	French

Phys Ed program	Science
Intramural program	Social Studies
Art	Computer
	Band

Relationships - Positive Factors

Teachers	Feelings like you know everyone
Outside visitors	Playing together
Making new friends	Humorous, understanding, cheerful teachers
Getting help choosing your future	Teachers who allow you to discuss feelings
Helping each other	Teachers who give you a chance to try new things
Allowances made by teachers for individual progress	Our ideas are accepted
When teachers don't yell at students	Parents are good resources
Principal	Learn how to get along with others
Friendship of the school	Teachers who take the time to explain
Other students	
Not much fighting	
Kids from different parts of the world	
Humorous teachers	
Accepting responsibility	
Big kids helping little kids	
Receive encouragement	
Learn how to work in groups	

Activities - Positive Factors

Noon hour lunch at school	Field trips
School patrols	Assemblies
Concerts	Choir
School newspaper	Catch-up period
Fire drill	Short school year
Films	Recess
House leagues	Outdoor education
CARE philosophy	Track
V.T.R.	School student committees
Dancers	Holidays
School spirit	Free dress standards
Free access to library	Noon hour activities
Talent nights	Skiing
Swimming	Graduation
Driver training	Class parties
Putting up the rink	Eating lunch at our desk

(ii) Negative Factors

Facilities - Negative Factors

Washrooms with no locks	Poor equipment
Vandalism	Messy hallways
School is too small	Small washrooms
Poor quality gym equipment	Poor playground
Lack of lockers	Water pressure down
Broken desks	Writing on bathroom walls
Dirty playground	Need comfortable chairs
Larger lunch rooms	More heat in winter
Band facilities	Old school
No soap in washrooms	Need more computers, V.T.R.'s

Program - Negative Factors

Not enough Phys. Ed.	Not enough variety in gym classes
Reading is boring	Not allowed to specialize
Too many subjects	Science
Tests, too many in one day	French
Choice of classes - too limited	Newer textbooks
English	Health - need textbooks
Social Studies	Math
Spelling	Losing Phys. Ed. time
Homework (last minute assignments)	Curving marks
Split grades	More art, music

Relationships - Negative Factors

- Students disobeying teachers
- People damaging other's property
- Teachers - poor
- Fighting among students
- People not listening
- Getting yelled at
- Teachers getting angry
- The strap
- Shy kids being left out
- Occasionally violence erupts on the playground
- Forced to be with people you don't want to be around
- Some teachers giving unfair comments
- Lack of control over students
- A feeling of being left out
- Feeling badly about yourself
- Pressure from other kids
- Some kids have more control over what happens in the classroom
- Not enough supervision
- The way teachers treat you
- No freedom
- Being blamed for things you don't do
- Kids fooling around when you're trying to learn
- Getting kicked out of class
- Picking on younger students
- Being kept in after school
- Sending people to the corner
- Being ridiculed
- Too much swearing
- Big kids pushing little kids around
- People teaching others
- Favoritism of some students
- Frustration at not being allowed to do things you want
- Not enough punishment for violence
- Being alone
- Stealing
- You may be restricted because a teacher disliked you
- Sometimes teachers get too involved in student's life
- People putting you down
- Teachers getting on your back
- Certain teachers punish the whole class for one student problem
- Name calling
- Wise cracks

When you ask to go to the bathroom you can't	Spoiled students
Some people are bossy	Boys don't respect girls
I dislike it when someone does something wrong and all they get is a talking to	Too many rules

Activities - Negative Factors

No house leagues	Recess is too short
Forced to do track and field	School starts too early
Homework is too much	Have to adjust to several types of teaching styles
Fire alarms - drills	No opportunities to follow your own interests
Rules applied inflexibly	Changes in schedules
Hard to be interested and involved in all activities	Pacing - hard for everyone to maintain the same pace
Forced to do work you don't enjoy and won't ever use in later life	
Pressure into "contests" and competition which can limit learning	

(iii) Wishes and Dreams

The section on wishes and dreams does not attempt to be an analysis of student expectations but rather a general look at what students would like to see in their schools. Again no limitations were applied to students hence the title Wishes and Dreams. The students were asked to respond to the question, "What would you do to make school a better place?"

Facilities - Wishes and Dreams

- Bigger gym
- Vending machines
- Swimming pool
- Bigger classrooms
- Separate parts in the room create cells within the classroom with different environments to accommodate different learning styles
- Have more personal space in classroom
- School cafeteria in all schools
- A playroom - not a sitting room
- Computer on every desk
- Bigger washrooms
- Heated room for putting on skates
- More windows
- Keep the school clean
- Put doors on the boys' washrooms
- Have students do janitorial jobs
- Close small schools
- More library books, textbooks
- More money for schools
- More lockers
- Desks with locks
- Modernize the facility
- Lockers, carpets, showers
- Clean up the school
- Student lounge
- Different colors in classroom
- Nice light fixtures
- Bathrooms with locks
- Music through earphones
- Clean up school yard
- Pray for no break-ins
- Provide a skating and curling rink

Program - Wishes and Dreams

Sex education	Tape recorders to take notes
More art classes	Have a teacher for each subject
Drop language arts	Girls and boys Phys. Ed. should be separate
Get rid of math	Provide family life education
Allow students to pick subjects	Talk about current events
Provide more career education	Teach courses about respect
Teach other languages	
A better choice of subjects	
Six months of Home Ec.	
Longer gym time	

Relationships - Wishes and Dreams

More power given to students	Two teachers to one room so that more help could be given
Get some better teachers	Better behavior among students
Provide more supervision	Cooperate
Remove problem students	Have more discipline on the playground
Treat each other more kindly	Do something about fighting
Keep all the nice teachers	Have a plan to help students with troubles
Help the teachers	Develop more school spirit
Less formal staff	
Respect for school	
Make school a joyful environment	
Change relationship between students and teacher	

Activities - Wishes and Dreams

Ease off work	Shouldn't have split grades
More class trips	More time to do work in school
School only in morning	Longer hours at school
Suggestion box for students	Shorter hours
Spares in the elementary school	Change the school year or day
Preparation for jobs	Longer library time
Discontinue the strap	More relaxing atmosphere
Have half-hour recesses	Don't have two tests on one day
Awards for academics	Less homework
More activities at noon	Ban testing
Have more fun activities together	Three days free every month
More grouping	Participation in clubs
More recommends	Start at 10 a.m. - dismiss at 4:30
Eliminate detention	
Shorter noon hour	
More plays	

]V. Teachers' Perception of School Environment

Very little data was gathered related to teacher perception. Teachers were asked to react to the student data as opposed to filling out a questionnaire. One of the recommendations will speak to the issue of teacher input.

What Does the Student Information Mean for Teachers?

1. The feedback for teachers, generally, is very positive. Negatives usually referred to personality characteristics rather than general climate.
2. The information provided showed a real pride students possess. Students would like rules more strictly enforced and punishment more severe for the few offender (In one school.)
3. It appears that most of the students appreciate efforts to treat them with dignity and self-worth.
4. Students do not appreciate yelling on the part of the teacher but rather clear explanations related to behavior.
5. Students emphasize in many ways the need for adult control - to supervise, minimize fighting and bad language yet allow for development toward self-direction.
6. Facilities are very important to students. The number of responses requesting an environment that is bright, clean and cheerful was not surprising.
7. The largest area of negative responses centered on relationships. Students viewed teacher attitudes and practices as very important to a good school.

8. Negative reaction to programs were surprisingly low. Students appeared generally satisfied but wanted relevancy in their programs and assignments.

PART C

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION REVIEW

1. Awareness Program

The literature supports that each school contains a unique environment and that environment has an impact on both productivity and satisfaction within an organization.

The Department of Education should initiate the development of a school environment awareness program. The program would be based on the determinants of school environment as outlined in the literature.

A discussion paper developed by the Department defining school environment and examining the major determinants would be a useful beginning.

2. Research Program

A research project should be commissioned on school environment in a cross-section of Saskatchewan schools.

The study would be short-term based on a large sample of all audiences in the school community.

Specifically, the study would attempt to determine the perceptions of school environment determinants. The results could be used to determine the approach to an awareness program.

3. Inservice Education.

In addition to a general awareness program the Department should develop an inservice package designed for local staffs to assist in:

(1) Researching local school environment.

(2) Establishing specific determinants of school environment.

(3) Developing practices to enhance school environment. The inservice package must be adaptable to meet local needs since it cannot be provincial in scope.

4. Change

The concept of change in relation to school environment should be addressed. In order to achieve the desired attributes of school environment appropriate change strategies must be examined.

This topic is dealt with elsewhere in the total project but the Department has to examine how change occurs at the Local level. Who is primarily responsible for initiating change? What is the role of the principal, local boards, individual teachers in the change process? How much time is available at the staff level to discuss and implement change? What are the major impediments to change? The list could go on indefinitely but it is clear that the need exists to examine the change process and how it can be supported by the Department of Education.

5. Teacher Training

At present the concept of school environment is not examined in any major way at the University. Classes should be available for teachers and administrators related to school environment.

The Department should urge both major teacher training institutions to implement specific classes for all teachers in the area of school environment. The diversity of responses among principals and teachers point to a lack of understanding in many cases of school environment.

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